OUR FAITH

Published by The Unitarian Christian Committee

Purpose:--"*To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man.*"

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Prayer

Lord of Life, we praise thee for the glory of earth's sunshine and for the fair face of another day.

We praise thee for that in us which responds to the voice of crowded marts and also to the company of quiet places.

We praise thee for the boundless space of little gardens; the good smell of the soil after rain, and the gay chatter of the birds of dawning.

We praise thee for the peaceful spirit which haunts certain scenes because hearts once were happy there, and may be again.

We praise thee for the beauty which is so common that it cannot be bought, or sold or cheapened by extravagant claims.

We praise thee for the jewels which lie hidden in work done with a cheerful will, and for the magic gold which is discovered in play when it is untouched by greed.

We praise thee for the dear affinities with persons who make us feel safe, and for the passing of those whose smile brings out the sun in our clouded hearts.

And we praise thee that the overflowing of a thankful spirit is never wasted, since thou dost hold us all within the Life that is greater than our little day.

Amen.

What Channing Saw in Jesus

"Christ's religion is very imperfect without himself; and therefore they who would make an abstract of his precepts, and say that it is enough to follow these without thinking of their author, grievously mistake and rob the system of much of its energy. I mean not to disparage the precepts of Christ, considered in themselves. But their full power is only to be understood and felt by those who place themselves near the Divine Teacher, who see the celestial fervor of his affection whilst he utters them, who follow his steps from Bethlehem to Calvary, and witness the expression of his precepts in his own life. These come to me almost as new precepts when I associate them with Jesus. His command to love my enemies becomes intelligible and bright when I stand by his cross and hear his prayer for his murderers. I understand what he meant by the self-denial which he taught when I see him foregoing the comforts of life, and laying down life itself for the good of others. . . . The command to love God with all my heart, if only written, might have led me into extravagance, enhusiasm, and neglect of common duties,—for religious excitement has a peculiar tendency to excess,—but in Jesus I see a devotion to God, entire, perfect, never remitted, yet without the least appearance of passion, as calm and self-possessed as the love which a good mind bears to a parent; and in him I am taught, as words could not teach, how to join supreme regard to my Creator with active charity and common duties towards my fellow-beings."

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

(In "Love to Christ," Channing's Works, 1 vol. ed., p. 323.)

Unscientific Humanism and Scientific Theism

(The following is an extract from a paper on "Theism Today" read by Dr. Rowland Gray-Smith to the Cosmotheist Society in Boston, May 20).

In the winter issue of the "Journal of Liberal Religion" criticisms appeared of a recent book, "The Meaning of Humanism." In reply to his critics, of whom I was asked to be one, the author, Dr. Reese, made this comment: "I find it difficult to conceive of

a universally valid cosmic view unless relativity itself is such." My reply to that is this: If we are forever imprisoned in the relative, if we cannot get beyond the relativity of a particular observer's point of view, then we can have no science.

That we can have no science was urged in antiquity by Protagoras. The best-known saying of that Greek Sophist is: "Man is the measure of all things." In the current issue of the "Humanist" we find Professor Auer writing, "This is Humanism—man the measure of all things." (Parenthetically, on a later page we find another contributor, no less a "humanist" than Professor Auer, making the measure of all things, not man, but the life impulse which man shares with the rabbit and the spider and the eagle.) According to Protagoras relativity was final, every observer of nature was confined to the relativity of his own observation-point, and therefore, concluded Protagoras, there could be no assured knowledge, no science.

For a demonstration of the fact that we do indeed have assured knowledge, look at the map in this morning's "New York Times" showing the shadow to be cast upon the earth by today's eclipse in Brazil. But sometimes we are forgetful of truth known, and think we describe science fully by saying it is a search for truth. And then, if we are not wary, we may find ourselves reducing religion to a "search for truth." But science is far more than a search for truth. Beyond a peradventure it can predict an eclipse.

In our own day as never before science has sought to protect itself against the agnosticism of Protagoras. It has done this by formulating the principle and the theory of relativity. The principle of relativity demands that all scientific laws shall be based upon observations that do not vary with the particular observation-point of any particular observer, upon the demand, that is, that all scientific laws shall be universally valid. In imposing that demand upon themselves scientists are recognizing that without it there could not be any science.

The theory of relativity associated with Einstein's name is a special example of obedience to that demand. It takes account of the relativity of the observation-point of the observer. By taking that into account, by making a scientist's findings co-variant with his observation-point, you can formulate a law which is itself invariant, which is independent of the relative, which is universally valid.

Einstein has told us that he believes in God, in the God of Spinoza, a God who is absolute Reality, whose nature is the matrix both of natural law and of the principles guiding the scientist's endeavor. In a similar vein, one of Einstein's greatest forerunners said that he was thinking God's thoughts after Him. Such confessions are not born of an irrational piety. They are a philosophical acknowledgment that without the assumption of the reality of a Mind whose knowledge is beyond the relative, science could neither begin nor progress.

ROWLAND GRAY-SMITH
(Minister, New North Church, Hingham, Mass., and Professor of Philosophy, Emerson College)

It Happened in Chicago!

It happened in 1945. All the Unitarian churches of the Chicago area were asked to contribute to a joint fund for the purpose of promoting Unitarianism by means of a series of radio broadcasts. Many of the churches gave, in good faith.

But the radio programs, when presented, under the auspices of the Unitarian Council of Chicago, turned out to be little more than "humanist" broadcasts. Scripts were prepared by a humanist director of the series of broadcasts. One minister of a small church in the Chicago area confessed that he was very uneasy, and not at all sincere, when he had to read the script which was handed him for one of the broadcasts.

But the important revelation of the trend which has been diligently forwarded by a vigorous humanist minority came when Dr. Preston Bradley was asked to appear on the broadcasts. Other speakers spoke first. When it came Dr. Bradley's turn, this is what the listeners heard over their radio sets: "Well, I have a script here which I am supposed to read, but I am not going to read it because I do not believe it. Unitarians are Christians!" And from that point on, Dr. Bradley proceeded to give his own viewpoint, that Unitarianism represents

liberal, rational, pure Christianity.

More power to Dr. Bradley! More power to every Unitarian minister, and every Unitarian who will dare to stand up and resist the organized attempt to make our Unitarian movement a secularistic, non-Christian, Godless, movement! It is time that Unitarians began to be aware of what is going on. Through the leadership of too many of our denominational officials, our Unitarian movement is becoming identified with humanism!

What, gentle reader, do you propose to do about it?

HARVEY SWANSON

A Statement Too Serious To Ignore

(An excerpt from "A Report To Unitarians" by Rev. Edward W. Ohrenstein, upon terminating his two-year term as Acting Dean of the Starr King School for the Ministry)

What is this disease that is taking root in the Unitarian body and has now succeeded in gaining dominance at our Pacific Coast school? It goes by the name "humanism." But it is not truly humanism as that good word is used among literate people. It is, more properly, secularism, the organizing of life apart from reference to God. It is the basic belief that all being can be comprehended in terms of the senses. It is the old materialism in new dress. Secularism is opposed to Christianity and to theism, both of which it regards as superstitious and disproved by scientific physics and philosophy. It is a grossly inadequate substitute for Christian faith, albeit it may be a way-station from bland ignorance to something higher.

For a number of years, the Unitarian movement has opened its doors to people of the secularist persuasion, not only to a seat in the pew—which is perfectly laudable—but to the pulpit, as well. The secularist "preacher" has proceeded to "debunk" and to sterilize the religious impulses of any of those who remained with him very long. Meanwhile, he has succeeded in driving into liberal Congregationalist or Episcopal churches those Unitarians who had any religious sensibilities. Many loyal Unitarians have remained in their churches, however, persevering, waiting in vain for a word of Christian faith and hope. Their patience is praiseworthy.

The Unitarian ministry today is honeycombed with secularists who, here and there, attract large audiences. But they do not gather congregations. It is part of a well-known pattern that when they run out of entertaining iconoclasm, they leave their "churches" (usually dead) and their personal followings, and turn to other work. Their preaching of political and economic nostrums proves to be no substitute for Christian faith. As a result of all this, the Unitarian movement languishes. Even an expensive promotional campaign can not revive it.

These may appear to be harsh words. But someone must say them. We who have watched the deterioration of our denomination have been silent too long. My own conscience compels me to speak out. For several years the official policy of our denominational leaders has been to suppress open discussion of the issues between so-called "humanism" and Unitarian Christianity. This has permitted the termites quietly to begin work at our foundations. And it has led only to confusion and the degradation of the Unitarian Church.

Under a false conception of tolerance and broad-mindedness we have tried to say to people who are Unitarians in the historic sense and who believe in the God of the Christian faith, "It makes no difference whether your minister believes in God or not; whether he offers you the dry bones of skepticism or the earnest witness of a God-centered life—go to church anyway and you will be a loyal Unitarian." We have tried to worship both God and no-God in the same service. And it cannot be done. Ultimate secularism and ultimate Christianity are absolutely incompatible. To confound the two in a religious organization is confusion. There is a Gresham's Law in religion, too, and the inferior form of worship will drive out the pure form. Precisely this is happening in our churches, today, wherever secularism is regnant. The time has come to recognize this incompatibility.

The ultimate issue is plain and simple. It should not be clouded by obfuscation. It is the question, Is there a real God, whom men should worship, or is there not? The

issue, shorn of all subterfuge, is nothing less than that. Liberalism is not a synonym for agnosticism, although the secularists are attempting to make it such. And I see no alternative but for Christians in the Unitarian Church to stand up, before their befuddled officialdom and say, "Yes! God is! And we shall shape the policies of our denomination by that conviction!"

A Letter From a Minister Who Left Us

(This letter is on file with the editor).

"Thank you for your greetings, and the copies of 'Our Faith.' Please do send us copies regularly. It will mean a lot to me personally. You see, I am now serving a Universalist Church—and having a grand time. I changed over because I allowed . . . . and . . . . to impress me (and depress me) with the charge of "orthodoxy" until I felt that what I have to offer—namely, the glorification of God's spirit in man—was out of order in the Unitarian ministry. I should have had the courage to fight those two, and all the rest of those who insist that "man is enough." By "fight" I mean challenge their "bootstrap humanism" in a more effective way, as you are doing. Please count me in on your efforts to fulfill the true genius of our Unitarian-Universalist churches—to be the progressive rational leaven within the Christian fold. The Ethical Culture Society is legitimately appealing to those who want no part of our Christian cultus.

"Yours in the struggle to help God's prodigal children be more mindful of the One who can make us more than equal to all our trials."

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Articles suitable for publication in "Our Faith" are welcome from all who wish to use these columns to express Unitarian Christianity.

The circulation of OUR FAITH, which began in April with 4,000, reached 9,000 in September.

A New Unitarian Group

The news comes of the organization of a new group under the name **The National Committee of Free Unitarians.** In furtherance of its objectives this Committee plans to circulate information regarding denominational affairs and its own activities.

The first stated objective of this new group includes the words of the "Purpose" of the **Unitarian Christian Committee** appearing on the title-page of **Our Faith.** That fact may have given rise to the impression that the **National Committee of Free Unitarians** might be an affiliate of the **Unitarian Christian Committee.**

Actually the two are distinct. The **Unitarian Christian Committee** was organized in 1944. The new Committee was organized recently without reference to the **Unitarian Christian Committee.** Those wishing information about the new group may obtain it from its headquarters, Room 918, Little Building, 80 Boylston St., Boston 16, Mass.

A Testimonial

"Thank you for sending me so promptly the copies of 'Our Faith' which I think is very fine—it gives me inspiration and confidence, and fills a great need—it really thrills me.

"Publication of 'Our Faith' makes me happier than anything else I have experienced in my church life for a long time. I hope it will prosper and have a large circulation."

DORIS VAN DU ZEE
Cambridge, Mass.

(Watch for our November issue! We are hoping to include a report and review of the General Conference meetings in Washington).